

Statement about the mission and role of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group

Affiliation

The ICPPR Bee Protection Group is an integral part of an international organisation, the International Commission for Plant Pollinator Relationships, ICPPR (formerly the ICP-BR and before that the ICBB). The ICPPR is one of the 82 scientific commissions of the IUBS (International Union for Biological Sciences) which is connected to the ICSU (International Council of the Scientific Unions).

The ICPPR Bee Protection Group is a non-profit organisation of volunteer researchers in a broad range of disciplines from within and outside Europe sharing the interest of improving tools for assessing and understanding bee protection within the context of modern, sustainable agriculture. The information provided by the experts within the Bee Protection Group is intended to serve as a reasonable foundation with which to base regulatory decision-making efforts both within the EU and more globally.

Background and mission

The Bee Protection Group held its first meeting in Wageningen, Netherlands, in 1980 and over the subsequent 38 years has become the established expert forum for addressing the potential risks of pesticides to bees. The initiative was in response to the need of regulatory authorities for expert advice to support achieving better regulations for protecting honey bees from potential harmful effects of pesticides.

Therefore, the mission of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group is to contribute to improving protection of bees and other pollinators from adverse effects due to the use of pesticides.

The group aims to develop, improve and harmonize test methods and risk evaluation procedures and to stimulate the scientific debate on the available approaches in the area of bees, other pollinators and pesticides.

Membership

ICPPR membership is open to all and no restrictions are placed on participation. The steering committee which leads the Bee Protection Group is comprised of equal representation from three sectors, i.e., government, academia and industry. All members of the steering committee, participants and working group members of the ICPPR Bee Protection Group act on a voluntary basis and are therefore unpaid for their duties. Experts participate in their own name and not as a representative of their professional affiliation.

Tasks

The tasks of the Bee Protection Group consist of developing guidance and guidelines on assessing and managing potential risk to bees and pollinators from pesticides and to propose and discuss current and emerging test methods and to organize ring-testing of promising test methods. The group aims to provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge on the science and the relevant experience of the scientists involved.

Cooperations

Since 1990 ICPPR collaborates with European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) on honeybees. In 1990, the EPPO and the Council of Europe established a Joint Panel to develop environmental risk assessment scheme for plant protection products (Standard series PP 3, Chapter 10: Honeybees). This scheme is a set of formal instructions to government authorities on how the risk to bees of proposed uses of pesticides should be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively. The ICPPR provided the technical input for Chapter 10 of the scheme and for the Standard testing method PP 1/170 *Side-effects of plant protection products on honeybees*. Apart from the discussions in the ICPPR Bee Protection Group, all EPPO Standards go through the approval procedure of EPPO, i.e., comments and suggestions from the National Plant Protection Organizations of all EPPO member countries are sought before final approval by EPPO Council and

recommendation to EPPO member countries for use in their registration procedures. The latest revision of both Standards done jointly with the ICPPR dates back to 2010.

Current work and cooperative activities

Since 1980 the Bee Protection Group has developed and pioneered risk assessment methods that have ultimately served as a foundation for regulatory decisions (e.g. sequential testing from lower to higher tiers, the hazard (risk) quotient approach and the development of standardised test methods). The increasing demand for a more refined risk assessment in all parts of the world and the requirements of international regulatory frameworks, such as EPPO, EFSA, EPA/PMRA and other international institutions highlights the ongoing need for expert discussions, scientific exchange, ring-test development and test method improvements. Tasks are organized around working groups dealing specifically with laboratory testing methods on adult honey bees, laboratory testing methods on larval honey bees, semi-field and full-field testing methods on honey bees, testing methods for bumble bees and other bee species, monitoring schemes, risks related to seed dusts and risks related to guttation droplets.

How the group works

The ICPPR Group organises symposia and working groups to discuss and develop new solutions for problems in the area of bee and pollinator protection from pesticides. The symposia papers and discussions are published in proceedings. To date, the ICPPR Bee Protection Group with its sub-groups is, apart of the recently established network of COLOSS, the only international scientific platform working on the improvement of testing methods. All participants at the meetings are free to volunteer and join the working groups addressing specific topics identified at the symposia. Scientists from all backgrounds - academic research, contract laboratories, industry, governmental risk assessors and risk managers - are invited to work together and to bring their available knowledge to contribute to the subject.

ICPPR Bee Protection Group, Steering Committee
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